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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Senior Research Staff on International Communism

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Transmittal of Memorandum -

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SINO-SOVIET RELATION:
THE CASE FOR A DIALECTICAL ANALYSIS

The attached memorandum is a preliminary statement of a working hypothesis: that relations among Communist states, and specifically between China and the USSR, are governed by a conscious effort to apply the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of dialectical contradictions. We are preparing a more extensive analysis of the doctrine and its current interpretation by Party theoreticians, coupled with speculative discussion of its concrete manifestations in the actions and statements of Mao, Khrushchev and the other Bloc leaders. We invite comment and criticism on this initial formulation.

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CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SINO-SOVIET RELATION:
THE CASE FOR A DIALECTICAL ANALYSIS

Journalistic and governmental discussion of the Sino-Soviet relation has developed during the past months into a virtual consensus on the proposition that an important divergence exists between the two Communist partners. Most commentators here and abroad appear to be projecting this in the direction of a disintegrative split within International Communism which could be of great benefit to the interest of the Free World. Another group holds such an optimistic projection in abeyance and speaks rather of an impasse of indefinite duration. A third and relatively small group holds that neither a deterioration nor an impasse is likely and that the correct projection is a gradual consolidation and increase of International Communist strength within the framework of the Sino-Soviet alliance. In our opinion this third position deserves more support than it receives at present.

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We do not deny the reality of some form of difference between Communist China and the USSR. There are, however, sharply divergent methods of interpreting and evaluating it. Broadly speaking, Western analysis appears to be conducted within a category of thought which may be expressed in a principle of classical physics: action and reaction are equal and opposite. As in the case of Newtonian physics, this analysis is capable of "saving the phenomena" so long as they are observed within the limits of a closed system.

To this matrix of largely mechanistic political and social concepts are added certain simplistic attitudes which tend to obscure Free World interpretation of Communist actions. Among these is a disposition to set these events in a highly limited time span, rather than projecting them, as Communists do, against years and decades of past and future development. A notable exception here is constituted by the numerous Catholic writers on Communism, especially Jesuits, who through conviction and discipline are used to dealing in timeless perspectives.

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Western analysis, moreover, often seems to ignore such ingrained Communist operational principles as, advance and retreat, zigzag, pressing the advantage, multiple purpose, and the discrimination of tactics and strategy. These add up to a fairly considerable list of points on which Western and Marxist habits of thought and action radically diverge.

During the four and a half years of its existence, this staff has consistently attempted to test prevailing Western judgments of International Communism against the conceptual framework of dialectical materialism. Without pushing the scientific analogy too far, we might call this a relativistic or Einsteinian approach, according to which no line is postulated as being straight in the Euclidean sense. We believe that this approach yields useful insights when applied to the current Bloc controversy.

The key to the Communist interpretation of conflicting relationships is the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist doctrine of contradictions. The text book essentials of

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this doctrine - and of its corollary, thesis-antithesis-synthesis - are well known and need not be developed here.

For our present purpose it is sufficient to advance the working hypothesis that the leaders of International Communism view the difficulties which confront the movement as contradictions which require dialectical resolution. Broadly speaking they arise out of the "new" situation created by the emergence of the "world socialist system," and the "decisive shift of the balance of power" in its favor. These contradictions are inherent in the sharply differing stages of development reached by the constituent members of the "socialist camp" especially the gap between the Soviet and the Chinese economies. Their resolution is greatly complicated by the fact that, although the USSR "heads the camp," it is theoretically only first among equals. "Separate" but not "isolated" roads to socialism have superseded the era of "socialism in one country." Khrushchev is not Stalin. Mao Tse-tung is a mighty champion in "socialist emulation."

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There is, of course, a qualitative difference between an intranational situation, in which the resolution of contradictions can be accomplished by a sovereign and dictatorial party, and an international situation in which no corresponding locus of supreme authority is constituted. Nevertheless, the application of dialectical method to the latter would appear to be a logical procedure for Communists to follow. The views of Mao on this subject have recently been commended to International Communism by no less a figure than Liu Shao-chi (World Marxist Review, Vol. 2, No. 10, October 1959).¹

It may be questioned whether there is any practical value to the West in attempting to apply these Communist categories to the analysis of the Sino-Soviet relations. We do not of course say that the Marxist-Leninist dialectic is

¹ SRS is preparing a more detailed study on the doctrine of contradictions and its application to the relations between countries of the "World Socialist system."

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objectively (in our sense) true, factual, scientific. We merely say that it is subjectively (in the Communist sense) a principle of dynamism and will, which, in the interest of our security, we simply cannot afford to ignore.

Without further elaboration of this contention we set forth a number of reservations addressed to the dominant Western belief in a deepening "split."

1. We question whether fundamental ideological conflict has arisen between the responsible leaderships of the Soviet and Chinese parties. It must be recognized of course that differences and shadings of interpretation exist and have always existed in Communist parties. These follow the pattern of a central line flanked by right and left spectra which vary in width and intensity. The attitude of Communist Party leadership toward these right and left bands ranges from the relaxed and tolerant to the sharp and minatory, according to circumstances. There is a never-ending interplay of judgment as to whether these deviations from the norm constitute "sectarianism" or "revisionism"

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and as to which of the two, left or right, is the greater danger at a given moment. There is by the very concept of dialectical materialism a constant Heraclitean flux in party affairs. In the propaganda, if not the conviction, of Communists, this constitutes a source of energy and vitality for the movement. It reflects "life itself."

2. The current Western analysis of the "differences" between Soviet and Chinese line is conducted largely on the surface. Its primary technique has been the contraposition of seemingly opposing statements drawn primarily from what might be called the "set pieces" in a rapidly shifting display of fireworks. An article or editorial in Red Flag or Pravda, the commemoration of Lenin's birthday, the speeches of a major international gathering, such as the WFTU meeting in Peking - all these feed the close, at times almost myopic analysis of the "indications" type, which tends to lead to optimistic conclusions on the imminence of a "split."

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3. A less reassuring conclusion results when these day-to-day utterances are subjected to a deeper contraposition, namely with the corpus of earlier statements - especially since 1956 - whose authority is acknowledged to be continuing and fundamental. These emerge from what may be called the "ecumenical councils" of the International Communist movement, notably the Conference of Communist and Workers Parties, Moscow, November 1957, and the major national synods - the 20th and 21st Party Congress of the CPSU, and the 10th Anniversary of the CPR. Current statements must also be tested against authoritative modern works of doctrine such as the new edition of the History of the CPSU, the Foundations of Marxism-Leninism (1959) or Mao Tse-tung's ex cathedra speeches of 1956-57. A second and less authoritative level of scrutiny is also required - the extensive area of theoretical journals of the Kommunist and Voprosy type.

This type of analysis is arduous, but it must be carried out before we can accept as valid the judgments

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derived from current statements. A significant step in this direction has been taken by Branko Lazitch ("D'un Prétendu Conflit Doctrinal entre le PC Soviétique et le PC Chinois, " Est & Ouest, Paris, 16-30 June 1960, #239). Utilizing direct comparison of current and authoritative past utterances, Lazitch attempts to reduce, or eliminate, the principal points of ideological contention adduced as evidence of actual or potential split. We do not of course regard this and other articles which might be cited as the end, but rather as the beginning of the kind of analysis which must be conducted. We are content for the moment to confirm Lazitch's judgment that on such matters as "the inevitability of war, " the nature of "imperialism, " the possibility of a "non-violent takeover" by Communism, there appears to be no basic difference of a strategic-ideological nature between the two partners.

What then is this all about? That there is a discourse, a dialogue between the senior partners with some participation of the junior partners of the movement, is

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certain. The significance of this exercise, however, is far from apparent. The familiar metaphor of the iceberg commends itself here.

We are in agreement with the point made by Lazitch that this is not a showdown preceding or ratifying a liquidation within the International movement. In the past such actions, no matter how violent and even bloody, have usually been successfully concealed by the Communists until they were completed. Even the most painstaking analysis of "indications" has rarely enabled us to penetrate into these gangsters' battles fought to the death in silence in dark alleys. The one partial exception to this rule, Myron Rush's account of the rise of Khrushchev, (Washington, D.C., 1958) in a sense proves the point. Rush, whose analysis was completed in draft by March 1957 - three months before the purge of the "anti-party group" - was able to breach by a few steps that line which divides foresight from hindsight, and it was his very success which is perhaps leading us today to an over-intensified application

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of analysis of this type. One may cite as an example the flurry of speculation over Mikoyan's "demotion" which reached a minor climax when the Kremlinologists noted his unexplained absence from Moscow followed by a reference to him as Deputy Chairman, without the customary "First" only to find the person and the full title back a few days later. Similar speculations have been occasioned by the prolonged absences of Mao.

If no showdown between the partners appears imminent, the question then arises: is this Sino-Soviet dialogue a mere deception? In the literal sense, almost certainly not. It is doubtful whether even the Communists would impute to themselves the omniscience to mount, orchestrate and pursue to a successful conclusion an effort of manipulation in which all contingencies were foreseen, all anticipated results assured.

We would suggest, however, the following possibility. Within the framework of dialectical criticism of partners described above, there would appear to be room

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for profitable manipulation of western attitudes. Contradictions arise among communists; they must be overcome. But in the process there is an advantage to be gained, a byproduct of "intoxication" which may equal the main product in value.

Some light may be thrown on this manipulative technique by considering the analogy of Pavlov's dogs.¹ The pertinent experiment was conducted by signals - circle and square - which correspond to positive and negative reinforcement - food. Gradually the shape of the square was altered, the 90° angles were imperceptibly changed until finally the distinction between the circle and the square was beyond the dog's capacity to discriminate. At this point it suffered a complete "neurotic" breakdown. It is said that this process has been tried on humans - presumably only within safe limits, since in the case of the dog, the damage has

¹ This point has been raised by both British and American psychologists, especially by George Sutherland of Baltimore, who has analyzed over 5,000 news headlines of Communist actions in terms of their neurosis-generating impact (Washington Post, 13 July 1960).

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been shown to be irremediable. (One dog who lived 19 years, never recovered from the dissolution of its personality which was induced by this experiment in his youth).

Although there is a substantial difference between controlled experiments on animals and uncontrollable manipulation of men and societies, the analogy is obvious. We must assume that tactics and strategy of the Communists are conducted with awareness of this Pavlovian principle.¹ It would seem plausible that they may be deliberately allowing the current ideological "dispute" to lose the nature of thesis and antithesis - circle and square - without, as yet, the emergence of a synthesis. The West, meanwhile, watches the subtle but accented shifts with fascination and growing frustration.

We are inclined to accord a serious place in the array of working hypotheses to the proposition that a conscious manipulation of "contradictions" - in themselves

¹In fact, Soviet psychology has made great advances beyond Pavlov, especially in the application of cybernetics to behavior conditioning.

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not desirable to the Communists but inevitable - is taking place.

One might list a number of corollaries to such a working hypothesis:

(a) Since "hard" and "soft" lines are dialectical necessities, they can be exploited to advance apparently conflicting, but ultimately harmonious interests of both partners as nations, and of the entire movement: Taiwan, Iraq, Algeria, the Indian Border, Guinea, Berlin, the "Summit" - the permutations are numerous, if not endless.

(b) The two partners can alter their roles with bewildering rapidity. Khrushchev's almost instantaneous change at Paris to something indistinguishable from the line of the Chinese Communists on Eisenhower, even adopting their "contempt" theme, was followed promptly by a reaffirmation of an otherwise unchanged conciliatory policy toward the peoples of the USA and their next President! The Chinese Communists have suggestively dredged out

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the Bandung line in the last few weeks, and almost simultaneously made gestures of reburying it.

(c) They can cash in on the "conflict" by ostentatious "reconciliation." The Bucharest Communique's reaffirmation of the November 1957 Declaration is in effect a "quasi-ecumenical" statement which can heighten Soviet prestige, restore the prospect of summitry, and produce other consequences favorable to the Socialist "camp." At the same time it helps further to "square the circle" by apparent concessions to the Peking line. The dramatic Disarmament Conference pull-out opens a whole set of dialectically balanced moves, of which the most significant point in the direction of the United Nations. All such gambits contain the possibility of inexorably drawing Communist China into the United Nations or alternatively wrecking that organization. In SRS-10 (18 June 1959) we have canvassed the possibility of the "commonwealth of socialist nations" - sodruzhestvo sotsialisticheskikh stran - becoming the matrix of a Commu-

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nist United Nations. There is even the possibility of a sort of dual "Commonwealth, " China and the USSR, each dominating its satellites, while exercising condominium in the movement as a whole.

None of these possibilities can be predicted with confidence, but neither can they be excluded.

There is indeed an impressive area of actual and potential contradictions in the Sino-Soviet relation, and it would be unthinkable that all of them could be fully resolved without major debate. The point which we believe requires constant emphasis is that Communists, by indoctrination, training, discipline, and sheer psychological conditioning habit, try - not always with success - to handle such matters within the classical "operational code of the Bolsheviks" (Nathan Leites). The method of preventing "non-antagonistic" contradictions from developing into "antagonistic" is that of "criticism and self-criticism, " "socialist emulation, " and adjustment of the general or party line and policy. All

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this has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout the history of the movement. What is new here is the passage from the Stalin era of "socialism within one country" and of "proletarian internationalism" dedicated to the support of the USSR, to the era of the "world socialist system" in which the co-equality of China is recognized. We may speak of a change from monolith to "duolith" and even beyond, to Togliatti's congeries of "polycentrist" parties, but the dominant note remains unity.

It is for this reason that the dialogue has centered so strikingly in appeals to the Moscow Declaration of November 1957 and that the Bucharest communiqué has reaffirmed it. This is the only document in the post-Stalin era which bears the full authority of an ecumenical council, of a new Comintern. This Declaration transcends any ex cathedra pronouncements which either Mao or Khrushchev could utter. Inevitably it is subject to shades of interpretation which, if allowed to develop unchecked, could become heresies leading to schism. There is always a possibility

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that a Communist counterpart of a Roman and Eastern Orthodox church could arise within the secular religion of Communism. There might be rival popes and there might be councils of Pisa and Constance, convened to break the papal schism and restore the unity of the establishment. These might fail, as they did in the history of Christianity, and confusion might be further compounded by a "Protestant" movement within Communism leading to an era of "religious wars."

We do not believe that such a fate for International Communism is portended by recent events. Looking beyond the pyrotechnics, we are struck with the continuing, often unspectacular evidence of solidarity, and above all by the affirmations of unity, which the "imperialist machinations" cannot destroy. It may be argued that the "lady doth protest too much," but in fact cultural, technological, scientific, economic and military cooperation goes on. Only when there is clear evidence that these lines of support are being eroded, can we confidently predict that the

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Soviet Union is in disintegrative conflict with its Chinese partner. In the meantime, the evidence is to the contrary.

Perhaps the most significant indicators lie in the field of scientific collaboration. The nuclear research center at Dubna is apparently functioning smoothly with participation of the European satellites and China. Even more important for the future is the Soviet application of computer techniques to a comprehensive front of research ranging from the physical and biological sciences through the behavioral and social sciences to such fields as psychology, pedagogy and economics, especially planning and automation. The Chinese are not lacking in brilliant Western trained specialists. All that is needed is a collective center comparable to Dubna. It is possible that the new research "city" at Novosibirsk will become the scientific heart of the "socialist commonwealth," beating with the pulse of cybernetics.

What is in process is the launching of the "transition to Communism." According to the proclamation of

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Khrushchev, this will gradually become "an almost simultaneous" advance. The more backward satellites and China itself are to be "leveled up" in the not too distant future. This is the supreme task of the present generation of Communist leaders. It brooks no conflict of purpose, whether of individuals, of nations or of parties.

We suggest that the failure of this world-challenging endeavor cannot be predicted with confidence on the basis of the analysis which has been conducted so far. We must proceed on the assumption that the challenge will persist, and will grow in intensity. In our efforts to meet it, we cannot afford to let our judgment of its nature be governed by either hopes or fears.

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